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THE MUSIC OF TO-MORROW

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PHASES OF MODERN MUSIC

EDWARD MACDOWELL

(*Living Masters of Music*),

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THE MUSIC OF TO-MORROW

AND OTHER STUDIES

By

LAWRENCE GILMAN

1878–

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CHARLES MARTIN LOEFFLER

A MUSICIAN WHOSE DISTINGUISHED AND MOVING ART MUST PERSUADE AN INCREASING APPRECIATION

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NOTE

Although the papers included in this volume appeared originally, in an embryonic state, in various periodicals, they have all undergone an extensive process of revision and amplification, and are, for the most part, virtually new. For permission to republish, in somewhat more permanent form, such passages and chapters as have already enjoyed a fugitive existence in print, I am indebted, in particular, to the editors of the *North American Review*, *Harper's Weekly*, the *Musician*, the *New Music Review*, and the *Musiclovers Calendar*.

L. G.

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THE MUSIC OF TO-MORROW

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THE MUSIC OF TO-MORROW

Let us wait in silence : perhaps ere long we shall be conscious of "the murmur of the gods."
—MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

IF prophecy in general is sufficiently fraught with peril and uncertainty, what is to be thought of the rashness of one who would assume to adumbrate, however tentatively, the future of the most incalculable of the arts? A reasonably acute observer of literary affairs living in the first quarter of the nineteenth century might, conceivably, have predicted certain dominant phases of the art of letters in our day; but can one sincerely imagine a musical critic contemporaneous, let us say, with Berlioz, accurately discerning

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the art of Richard Strauss? One is aware, of course, of that brilliant achievement of reconstructive criticism which has so comfortably deduced the Strauss of to-day from the Berlioz of an elder time. Yet it will be conceded, I think, that the intelligence which shaped "Don Quixote" and "Ein Heldenleben" is far from being implied in the order of creative imagination which wrought out "Benvenuto Cellini" and the "Symphonie fantastique." A culmination of the tendency toward greater definiteness of utterance—toward the more deliberately "programmatic"—is the accomplished and obvious fulfilment: that, indeed, might have been foreseen; but those qualities by virtue of which Strauss is both essentially himself and essentially modern could scarcely have been discerned in even so recent a past as that of the first of musical Romantics.

It should be noted, however, in extenuation of the rashness of such an attempt at prophecy as is contemplated here, that the characteristic phases of musical art are becoming, it would seem, of shorter and shorter duration. Newness fades out of them with a rapidity little less than startling; for music is, in its present estate, the most fluid, the most mercurial, of æsthetic phenomena. The novelty of yesterday is, in an almost literal sense, the commonplace of to-day. In no other art may one witness so constant an alteration of surfaces. The creation of new materials of expression keeps pace with the disuse of those that have become jejune and outworn. Even the flagrant modernity of Strauss is become—if one may venture to whisper it—a little outmoded, a little *vieux jeu*. That nine-days' harmonic wonder of a decade ago, the conflicting tonalities at the end of

"Ein Heldenleben," falls upon the ear of our day with an effect as little stimulating as that of a conventional cadence; and the luxuriant chromatics of "Tristan und Isolde"—with which the history of music turned a memorable page—sound almost elementary in comparison with the procedures of the younger French school. I make these observations without the slightest wish either to provoke the conservative or to divert the frivolous and the *blasé*: it is the sober truth that, to-day, "the music of the world," in the phrase of a delicate and subtle essay of Mr. Vernon Blackburn's, "flies away from us as we watch the burning out of the sun. Like bird after bird, its newness flies from us, and finds separate resting-houses here and there in the places of the past." The years "do actually steal from it an absolute quality which it once possessed"; and they steal

it with an increasing haste, an increasing avidity. It is through the contemplation of this fact that one is emboldened to attempt so venturesome and ungrateful a task as that of forecasting the immediate future of the art; for it is not, perhaps, impossible, through a scrutiny of its recent past and of its present tendencies, to play the rôle of prophet with a measure of reasonableness.

What, then, is to be its future course? toward what condition, of substance and technique, is it tending? Toward a simplification and lightness of content, a recovery of the Mozartean ideal, as some have chosen to believe; or toward an increased fineness and intensity of emotional substance, an increased subtlety and complexity of texture? Is music to lay firmer hold upon life, is it to become increasingly articulate; or is it to concern itself less intimately with the human

drama, and revert to the comparatively untroubled estate of an art of pure design? Is it, in brief, to tend more and more definitely toward what we roughly and quite inadequately term the "programmatic" ideal, or is it to become once more an exercise in sheer tone-building?

That it should revert to its early irresponsibility and paucity of substance is inconceivable: music can no more be again as if Wagner, Tschaikowsky, and Strauss had never lived, than painting can ignore its debt to Velasquez or to Monet, or English verse its obligation to Keats, to Shelley, to Rossetti. That music will renounce any of its slowly acquired potencies of vivid and intense expression is unthinkable; and possessing them, as it does, it craves and imperatively demands a full and important subject-matter to work upon.

How, then, in future, is it to approach its material—"that immense and magic spectacle of human affairs," as Arnold called it, "which fascinates the gaze of every man of imagination, and which would be his terror, if it were not at the same time his delight"? The drama of external incident and of emotional conflict, which does not, in Maeterlinck's phrase, "go beyond the determined struggle of man against man, and desire against desire," would seem to have been exploited in modern music to the point of exhaustion. In Strauss—whom one may be permitted to allege as a typical exemplar of the art in its most characteristic present phase—we cannot escape the tyranny of action: either upon the material or the psychic plane, things must inveterately "happen": we are confronted with a sick man struggling against dissolution, with the pitiful career

of the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, with a collision between the Overman and the Cosmic Riddle, with the exploits of a magnificently subjective hero, with —but we may relegate the "Domestica" to a less responsible occasion than the present. For all his truth and vigour of presentation, for all his intrepid and rich humanity, Strauss has never touched, has never attempted to touch, that region of experience which lies over the borderland of our spiritual consciousness: and it is toward that region that all the finer and, as I think, more permanent elements in our modern art and thought are surely swerving.

Strauss represents, it would appear, a declining impulse—the impulse toward an incessant exploitation of the dynamic element in life. There is another and more enduring impulse — that which urges us to listen, not for the echoes of

passional and adventurous conflict, but for the vibrations of the spirit beneath. Even in our own day there are tone-poets who, like Turgenyeff, "weave great romances out of what did not happen": musicians who are sympathetic kinsmen of such spiritual adventurers as M. Maeterlinck and Mr. Yeats in their common and significant reaction against those who are ever, in Mr. Arthur Walkley's vivacious phrase, "on the prowl for 'documents'": who dwell upon the confines of a crepuscular world whose every phase is full of subtle portent, and who are convinced that "there are in man many regions more fertile, more profound, and more interesting than those of his reason or his intelligence." The temperament and ideals of M. Maeterlinck, most representative and insatiable of modern mystics, find a partial analogue, for example, in the music of Charles

Martin Loeffler—a cosmopolitan in his art as in his life, whose concern with the things that are actual and present in the world of the imagination is almost wholly negligible: who evokes in his art a beauty, an emotion, which issue from

> "A more dream-heavy land,
> A more dream-heavy hour
> than this . . ."

and whose inspiration comes to him tinged with the remoteness and the fascination of a spiritual solitude. And in France there is Claude Debussy, the subtlest temperament in European music, who is employing his luminous and recondite art in the weaving of a hesitant mysticism into designs of impalpable and iridescent beauty. These are only several, as they are the most eminent, of those dreamers and poets who are voicing a spirit that is abroad among the arts and

among those whose thought is both sensitive and profound. For them, as George Russell (himself a mystic of exquisite temper) has said revealingly of Mr. Yeats' poetic personages, "even in the swaying of a hand or the dropping of hair there is less suggestion of individual action than of a divinity living within, shaping an elaborate beauty in a dream for its own delight . . ." And what he says further is not less applicable to that tendency in modern music in which I like to descry an augury for the future. "Other poets," he observes, "have written of a Wisdom overshadowing man and speaking through his lips, or a Will working within the human will, but I think that in this poetry we find for the first time the revelation of the spirit as the weaver of beauty."

What, in music, is to come of this relatively obscure, but evident and pro-

foundly vital impulse? To what is it leading? To the search, I think, for a still more intimate, luminous, and eloquent means of restoring to us that sense of the invisible which music, pre-eminently among the arts, is fitted to convey. The order of mysticism which has crept into its being in our time is not yet free from sensuousness; and it is overmuch preoccupied with the merely fantastic, the consciously bizarre. I believe that it will shake itself clear of these things; that it will attain, too, an added fluidity and fineness of expressional texture; that it will become continually less vehement, violent, and assertive. I can hear, in this supposititious art that I like to imagine, supremely moving tone-sequences, poignantly chromatic in their progress and inter-relation, yet wholly different (more supple and various) from the formulas perpetuated in contemporary

music by those who have drunk too deeply at the intoxicating spring of Wagner's genius. I am aware of a new voice and a new art, subtle yet commanding, having strange and undiscovered potencies of communication, of revelation —a speech at once luminous and esoteric, importunate and profound. Its persuasions, perhaps, shall lead us closer "to the gates of our being . . . . . where are the fountain-heads."

CLAUDE DEBUSSY, POET AND DREAMER

"Whom lovest thou best, enigmatical man, say, thy father, thy mother, thy sister, or thy brother?"

. . . . . .

"Thy friends?"

. . . . . .

"Thy fatherland?"

. . . . . .

"Gold?"

"*I love the clouds . . . the clouds which pass . . . over there . . . the marvellous clouds.*"

—CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

THOSE whom duty keeps more or less vigilantly at post upon the critical watch-towers have of late been increasingly aware of that none too frequent apparition: an artistic figure of wholly novel physiognomy — precisely, of a musician who made an immediate impression of

singularity and distinction. A Frenchman, he spoke a language which was as a strange tongue to those for whom Gallic music in our day is summed up in the diversions of Saint-Saëns, Massenet, and their kind. His utterances bore the authentic stamp of modernity; yet it was not the modernity of Wagner, nor of Brahms, nor of Strauss. He eluded positive definition; nor was his school, at first glance, altogether obvious. This perplexing and eccentric personage was Achille Claude Debussy, born at St. Germain in 1862, a *Prix de Rome* winner in 1884, now living in Paris; composer of "Pelléas et Mélisande," a music-drama based upon Maeterlinck's play; of the "Trois Nocturnes" for orchestra; of the "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune," after the Eclogue of Mallarmé; and of other orchestral and choral works, chamber-music, piano

pieces, and songs. In Paris to-day he disputes with Vincent d'Indy the place of honour among the musical elect; he is industriously imitated; and elsewhere, as in America and in England, he is exercising an influence that is already far from negligible.

Debussy, with what one must regard as an impish endeavour to confound the understanding of those who would too confidently appraise his art, has observed, gravely enough, that music "should give us immediate joy"; should be "perceptible"—an admirable jest from one whom his colleague, Alfred Bruneau, has accurately characterised as the "très exceptionnel, très curieux, très solitaire M. Claude Debussy." For this outspoken champion of obviousness and *naïveté* is known to his opponents as the most incorrigible of *précieux*, and those who misunderstand his purpose and dis-

like his method call him "un cérébral," an epithet that, while grotesquely inaccurate as a definition, is at least a sufficiently clear indication that he is not regarded precisely as an active exemplar of the doctrines he has avowed. Anyone who is at all aware of his essential quality knows that no artist ever more uncompromisingly shut himself in his tower of ivory than does Debussy. He exhibits an abhorrence of the commonplace, of the easily achieved, which is, as Mr. Philip Hale has justly observed, "malignant"; he "shuns the harmonically agreeing crowd as he does the mob of loungers on the boulevard." Yet this detachment, this aversion to direct communication, this passion for the esoteric, is wholly sincere—once one has become fully cognisant of his personality, it is impossible to conceive him writing otherwise.

It is a point of approach which has already, and abundantly, justified itself. There is marvellous music in his "Pelléas et Mélisande"—undoubtedly, thus far, his masterpiece—music of a twilight beauty and glamour, music that persuades and insinuates, that persistently enslaves the mind. Here, as has been said of a kindred art-work, is one of those "dream-coloured dramas of the mind, best seen against imagined tapestries . . . against revealing shadows and tragic glooms and radiances," whose compulsions are very actual and very poignant. One is here aware of elemental forces working in silence and indirection; of a secret and haunting beauty inhabiting the shadowy figures who move dimly, with a kind of shy and wistful pathos, through a no less shadowy pageant of griefs and ecstasies and fatalities. The "Nocturnes" for orchestra are conceived half in the spirit

of landscape, half in the mood of reverie. Here, as Debussy has himself explained, the composer is not concerned "with the form of the nocturne, but with everything that this word includes in the way of impressions and special lights." In the first, "Nuages," is "the unchangeable appearance of the sky, with the slow and melancholy march of clouds" —a conception realised with an incomparable felicity and restraint. "Fêtes," the second of the set, is as elusive and bafflingly suggestive as the fading actuality of a dream: there is the intimation, in Debussy's own words, of "a festival and its blended music," and passing through it a magical and entirely chimerical procession. It is an extraordinary fantasy — an embodiment of a concept so subtle as quite to defy exposition. One savours it, and is moved and enthralled by it, but exactly what it implies

is as evasively stated in the music itself as in Debussy's cryptic exegesis: "Movement, rhythm dancing in the atmosphere, with bursts of brusque light—luminous dust participating in total rhythm," are his words for it. The third piece, "Siréns" (written for orchestra and women's voices), is no less impalpable: ". . . the sea and its innumerable rhythm" is the keynote of its mood—the sea and its voices of seduction and command. In the "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune"—an earlier work—Mallarmé's famous rhapsody, which is exquisite enough in itself, is, in a way, transfigured. It is music of the most inveterate subtlety, of the most aerial refinement; yet it grips and abides.

It is made clear throughout his later and characteristic work that this unique tone-poet lives almost wholly, and with an unequalled intensity, in what one

must call, for want of an apter term, the psychic world. His music is coloured, not with the hue and quality of moods which are the result of vague or specific emotional stimuli, but, as it were, their astral images — their reflection in the supersensuous consciousness: he gives you, in brief, the thing alembicated, distilled to the last degree. Herein lies, I believe, the secret of his remarkable art. For him the visible world does not, recognisably, exist—it is only upon the borderland of his soul that he discerns any certitude of what other men know as passion and emotion. In his eager and insatiable thirst for all beauty that is fugitive, and interior, and evanescent, he reminds one of that most sensitive of modern poets, William Butler Yeats. He is like him in his supreme unconcern with those emotional gestures that are traditional and immediately significant.

Hence it is that he is far less responsive to that region of the spirit where "the multitudinous beatings of many hearts become one," than to the thrall of a luminous and absorbing world of dream and fantasy. His contemplation of reality is at once clairvoyant and ecstatic:

"You need but lift a pearl-pale hand,
And bind up your long hair and sigh;
And all men's hearts must burn and beat . . . ."

But he worships at an altar whose true significance, it may be, he does not fully apprehend. His is less the adoration of beloved things than of the priestess of beauty who discloses their immortal substance.

This spiritual attitude is revealed through the medium of a style which is, in itself, singular and arresting enough to suggest to the most casual the presence of a new voice among the clamorous

tongues of contemporary music. Certain of its roots strike deep into the fertile soil of Wagner; yet from that source of immeasurable richness Debussy has won a product that is, to-day, altogether his own. He has contrived an entirely novel system of expression. It pays tribute neither to the elder traditions of diatonic procedure, nor to the ungoverned chromaticism whose formulas have so dominated the music of the last half-century. From the tyranny of the ascending half-tone progression of which Wagner's "Tristan" gave modern musicians the pattern, he has, in his later and representative work, kept himself conspicuously free. His system is, in a narrow and pedagogic sense, subversive, for it involves a complete overthrow of those canons of tonal integrity which, for so long, have seemed to have the force and authority of immutable law. Wagner was censured for

modulating in every bar; but Debussy modulates with every beat of the measure. It is the signature of his style. He has broken down almost the last of the artificial barriers that a restricted interpretation of musical principles has arbitrarily set up between the different keys; and he has attained thereby an order of fluid and expansive utterance that is capable of an unpredictable eloquence.

Harmonically, his style is a marvel of invention and artistry. Almost twenty years ago Debussy was employing in certain songs harmonic ideas that, even to-day, perplex and disconcert many minds not unreclaimably orthodox; and in his maturer work—in, for example, "Pelléas et Mélisande" and in the "Nocturnes"—he does things that, for those whose chosen or hieratic function it is to uphold the classic codes, seem little short of anarchistic. Yet, when his idiom

is comprehended, one becomes aware of a delicately inexorable logic, an uncompromising ideal of form, underlying the shifting and apparently lawless structure. He is the first composer to suggest completely the analogy of a painter mixing colours. His harmonic hues are not so much juxtaposed as blended ; his tonal combinations refract and, so to speak, re-echo one another, as the dominant notes of the painter's colour scheme merge into and react upon their complements. For in this music the key relationships established by long tradition are no longer apparent ; indeed, for our ears, they cease to exist at all. We are, to alter the figure, upon a changing and multicoloured sea ; there are impinging currents, and we are conscious of waves and tides. The familiar buoys are absent ; yet we are not sensible of being adrift—we are invited merely to yield

ourselves to a new control, to a wayward-seeming pilot whose understanding, it may be, perceives deeper currents and subtler winds than does our own.

Debussy marks a return—how broadly significant one need not now inquire—to a method essentially homophonic, made natural enough, no doubt, by his preoccupation with specifically harmonic effects. He has shown no especial fondness for intricate polyphony. There are not a few contrapuntal felicities in his writing, but they impress one as incidental. He has demonstrated no particular capacity, or perhaps one should say no liking, for the deliberate accomplishment of such polyphonic miracles as are worked by Richard Strauss with so superb a mastery. Instead, he has carried to a point of almost incredible adroitness and flexibility the art of purely harmonic utterance. He has invented,

indeed, a new harmonic idiom, and has measurably enlarged and enriched the expressional material of music. Many of the most beautiful and typical moments in his work are wrought by mesmeric effects of sheer harmony. He can create an atmosphere by the iteration, in various positions, of a single chord. The musician will observe, for instance, his extraordinarily eloquent and daring use of the chord of the dominant ninth, which is almost a hall-mark of his writing ; and the particular use which he makes of augmented intervals and recondite suspensions is unexampled. The melodic element does not hold so significant a place in his scheme. But one must immediately qualify such a statement by the observation that Debussy is very far from turning melody and its persuasions out of doors ; nor is the type of melody which is native to his genius to be impeached because it

will not stand the absurd test of being listened to and appraised without its harmonic support. His melody is emphatically individual. There are times when it verges upon obviousness, and it is not wholly guiltless of the sentimental curve. Sometimes, and quite properly and inevitably, it is but the border of his harmonic design, or is more rhythmic than melodic, without marked character of its own; again, though less often, it asserts itself with potency and distinction; at its best it has both saliency and beauty, and then it partakes of the deep-seated and influential magic that informs his musical personality.

That the various elements in his art co-operate with admirable success is, it would seem, sufficient proof of the justness of his proportioning of their functions. Consider, for a moment, his setting for

orchestra of Mallarmé's elaborate fantasy, "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." The music, in its general conception, is wholly unpretentious. A brief chromatic figure, a kind of melodic suspiration, is set against an iridescent harmonic background shimmering through an exquisite orchestral veil; later, above rich and shadowy sonorities, a wide-arched phrase pulses with languid desire; then a gradual dissipation into silence. Yet, simple as it is at first blush, the thing is a masterpiece of inspired felicity — of beauty achieved by methods new in musical art; and it is a comparatively early score. With every work which he puts forth, Debussy makes it increasingly evident that he has learned the secret of that free and pliant articulation whose ideal Mr. Yeats has set before the minds of poets. He has cast out of his art—or, rather, he has eschewed—those "energetic

rhythms, as of a man running, which are the invention of the will with its eyes always on something to be done or undone" ; and he has sought out "those wavering, organic rhythms which are the embodiment of the imagination, that neither desires nor hates, because it has done with time, and only wishes to gaze upon some reality, some beauty."

Debussy's musical ancestry is not obscure. He has owed much to Wagner, whom in print he has called, with diverting vehemence, "imsupportable." The early songs show quite clearly his allegiance to the creator of "Tristan," full as they are of his own quality. From Massenet he acquired some minor traits which he is happily unlearning. For any marked traces of the influence of Berlioz, of Liszt, of Brahms, one searches fruitlessly. Occasionally he makes one think of César Franck ; but Wagner has been

his fountain-head. He has gone far on the path of his own destiny; no one since Wagner himself, not even Strauss, has evolved for himself a style more richly dyed with personality; but the greatest of modern music-makers taught him, at the start, much that he learned well and deeply. He acquired all that Wagner could teach him of the potency of dissonantal combinations, of chromatic relationships, of structural flexibility; and he has applied the lesson, with extravagant *finesse* and most subtle understanding, to his own intensely sophisticated yet unlaboured art.

One wonders for what field of creative musicianship his gifts best fit him—whether for what we amusingly call "absolute" music, or for that whose primary inspiration proceeds from a dramatic, pictorial, or concretely emotional stimulus. It has been said of him

that he is "obviously a 'literary' composer," that "his brain must first be excited by the contemplation of a dramatic situation, a beautiful bouquet of verse, a picture, a stirring episode in a novel. But why cavil whether the initial impulse for his music be the need of money or Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa?*" Why, indeed? Undoubtedly, in this sense, he is a "literary" composer. His only considerable works that are not avowedly associated with a particular external stimulus are his "Fantasie" for piano and orchestra, and his string Quartet, a curiously fascinating piece of writing that dates from what may be called his "middle period"—it was composed in 1893, and produced in Paris by Ysaye's quartet in the same year. In lyric form there are, besides the songs, "L'Enfant Prodigue," an early cantata which won him the *Prix de Rome* at the Institut

in 1884; "La Demoiselle Élue," after Rossetti, composed four years later in Rome; and "Pelléas et Mélisande," his most important and indicative work. For orchestra there are the "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune (Églogue de S. Mallarmé)," to give it its full title; the "Trois Nocturnes"; a "Danse Sacrée" and a "Danse Profane," for chromatic harp and orchestra; and three sketches, "La Mer": all belonging to the period between 1889 and 1906. There are numerous piano pieces, of which the more characteristic are a "Suite Bergamasque," "Estampes (Pagodes, La Soirée dans Grenade, Jardins sous la Pluie)"; "Masques"; "L'Isle Joyeuse;" and "Images (Reflets dans l'Eau, Hommage à Rameau, Mouvement)"; and there are many songs, in which are contained much that is rare and typical. This is, quite evidently,

the output of a music-maker for whom the most engaging function of his art is its capacity for emotional and dramatic representation. Yet, for those who know him, it will seem otiose to record the fact that, however natural an exemplar of "programmatic" writing he may be, he is not a mere tonal realist, a slave to delineation. It has been made evident enough in the foregoing pages, I think, that he is, in the purest sense of that outworn and misdirected term, an impressionist—a sensitive recorder, to use his own apt phrase, of "impressions and special lights."

His doctrines and prepossessions are contained *in esse*—have come, as it were, to a focus—in "Pelléas et Mélisande." He has revealed in this, as in no other work, his distinguishing traits. Nowhere else is he so completely and disarmingly himself, so happy in his medium. One

would have said, in advance of the event, that he, of all living composers, was best fitted to write music for Maeterlinck's beautiful and exacting play. He was not only best fitted, he was ideally fitted; in listening to his music one catches oneself imagining that it and the drama issued from the same brain. Not only is it impossible to conceive of the play wedded to any other music; it is difficult, after hearing the work in its lyric form, to think of it apart from its tonal commentary. For Debussy has caught and re-uttered, with almost incredible similitude, the precise poetic accent of the dramatist. He has made definitely and poignantly articulate the heart-shaking sadness and beauty of this "vieille et triste légende de la forêt." Its indescribable glamour, its veiled and shadowy loveliness, the magical and fate-burdened atmosphere in which it is steeped—these

things have found voice and tangibility in Debussy's score.

He has subjected the play to anything but a conventionally operatic treatment. The voices sing in a constant chant—technically, an unbroken recitative; there is no vocal melody whatever, none of the contrasted declamation and *cantabile* that Wagner employs with so brilliant an effectiveness. It was this feature of "Pelléas" that, more than anything else, brought down upon its composer's head the wrath of the rearguard when the work was produced at the Opéra-Comique in April, 1902. To the dissenters, his musical personages were mere "stammering phantoms"; he was regaled with the age-worn charge of having "ignored melody altogether"; and Maeterlinck himself (whose musical perceptions are not, conceivably, unlimited) called the work an "incomprehensible version."

Debussy has defended his practice with point and directness: "I have been reproached," he says, "because in my score the melodic phrase is always found in the orchestra, never in the voice. I wished — intended, in fact — that the action should never be arrested; that it should be continuous, uninterrupted. I wanted to dispense with parasitic musical phrases. Melody is, if I may say so, almost anti-lyric, and powerless to express the constant change of emotion or life. Melody is suitable only for the song (*chanson*), which confirms a fixed sentiment. I have never been willing that my music should hinder, through technical exigencies, the changes of sentiment and passion felt by my characters. It is effaced as soon as it is necessary that these should have perfect liberty in their gestures as in their cries, in their joy as in their sorrow." However much one

may hesitate to subscribe to Debussy's generalities, the final justification for his procedure is in the fact that it is ideally suited to its purpose—the tonal utterance of Maeterlinck's rhymeless, metreless, and broken phrases. To have set them in the sustained *arioso* style of "Tristan und Isolde" would have been as impossible as it would have been inept. As it is, the writing for the voices in "Pelléas" never, as one might reasonably suppose, becomes monotonous. The achievement —an astonishing *tour de force*, at the least—is as artistically successful as it is unprecedented in modern music. It is pleasant to speculate upon what Rossini or Verdi or Gounod—or, indeed, Wagner—would have said to the idea of an opera written, from beginning to end, in recitative; yet the effect of the thing is spontaneous, unforced, inevitable.

In his treatment of the orchestra Debussy makes scarcely less resolute a departure from tradition. There is little symphonic development, in the Wagnerian sense. There are a number of representative phrases, of singular beauty and character, but they are employed more sparingly and simply than modern precedent would have led one to expect. They are seldom set in sharp and vividly dramatic contrast, as with Wagner; nor does Debussy contrive the fabric of his accompaniment as a polyphonic interweaving of significant themes. His orchestra reflects the emotional implications of the text and action with scrupulous fidelity, but suggestively rather than with detailed emphasis. The drama is far less heavily underscored than with Wagner; the note of passion, or of conflict, or of tragedy is never forced. His personages love and desire, exult

and hate and die, with a surprising economy of vehemence and insistence; there are scarcely more than a dozen *fortissimo* marks in the entire score. Yet, unrhetorical as the music is, it is never pallid; and in such truly climactic moments as that of Goloud's agonised outbreak in the scene with Mélisande, in the fourth act, and the ecstatic culmination of the final love scene, the music supports the dramatic and emotional crisis with superb competency.

Throughout, the effect is of the enclosure of the play in an atmosphere of ambient and suffusing tone: it is this complete merging of speech, action, music, and scenery, this interfusion of elements, that makes the work in its lyric form the unparalleled and insinuating thing it is. Many passages are of an hypnotic and abiding fascination.

There is something necromantic in the art which can so swiftly and so surely cast an ineluctable spell upon the heart and the imagination—such a spell as is cast in the scene at the "Fontaine des Aveugles," in the second act; or when, upon the staircase under the castle tower, Mélisande's unbound hair falls and envelops Pelléas—an unforgettable page; or when the lovers meet for the last time at the Fountain of the Blind; or in the scene of Mélisande's death—one of the most pathetic and affecting pages in all music. With what simplicity, concentration, and delicate precision Debussy has accomplished his results, only those who care to understand the structural organisation of a score can quite appreciate. These will wonder at the elasticity and richness of the harmonic texture—which, while it is incurably "irregular," is never crude nor inchoate;

at the suppleness and refinement of the melodic line ; at the rhythmical variety and expressiveness ; at the masterly and individual orchestration. But it need require no faculty of trained perception justly to value the excellences of Debussy's score. There is great beauty, great eloquence, in this music. It has sincerity, dignity, and reserve, yet it is charged to the brim with ardour, with tenderness, with sensibility. I cannot forbear to think, in listening to it, that it fulfils, in a remote and inexplicable way, the mood and the significance of those fragmentary lines by that other poet, lamentably dead, whose art owned so much that was akin to the deeper moods of music: I cannot but feel that the musician is here as one who, upon "dim garths of shadow and silence, put a reed to his lips and played a white spell of beauty"—

that "here are the broken airs that once you loved . . .

"The fable-flowering land wherein they grew
Hath dreams for stars, and grey romance for dew."

It is less with the thought of marking its deficiences than of defining the limit of what it attempts, that one notes of Debussy's art, as a whole, that it has more of ecstasy than of vigour, that it excels in subtlety rather than in breadth. Yet it is neither frail nor slight. It is always, in its graver moments, at close quarters with human and sincere emotion; but Debussy, one must say again, envisages his world through a psychic veil that magicalises without distorting—a veil that, while it may lessen the impression of actuality, yet has the curious and compensating property of revealing in the vision unsuspected and secret

aspects, unnoticed lights and surfaces and contours. Here is a musician who walks with those eager and quickened beings for whom, behind every concrete manifestation of human life, hovers a shape of fire and air—for whom the dreaming spirit of the world has a far greater authenticity and a nearer presence than the shifting substances that are its shadow. It is this remote, this astral life that profoundly and exclusively concerns him. Of the manner in which his art reflects it, one may not inaptly say that it has pervadingly that beauty defined by Pater —"a beauty wrought from within . . . the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions."

A DISCUSSION WITH VINCENT D'INDY

It is on this account that fire surpasses other bodies in beauty, because, compared with the other elements, it obtains the order of form: for it is more eminent than the rest, and is the most subtle of all, bordering as it were on an incorporeal nature. PLOTINUS.

M. VINCENT D'INDY is a most exceptional person; for he is both a musician and unassuming, extraordinarily gifted, yet wholly without self-consciousness or pose. A man of singular attainments, he is singularly without assertiveness, without the kind of ambition that relegates so many a successful musician to the class of persons whom one crosses the street to avoid.

"What I write," said M. d'Indy to a

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friend, "is simply the reflection of ideas that have engrossed my imagination; and there," he observed, in effect, "I leave the matter; if it seems good to you, so much the better; if not, it cannot be helped." As he takes a dispassionate view of his own work, so he is remarkably catholic and unbiassed in his views of his contemporaries. He holds emphatic opinions concerning the artistic status of his *confrères*, and he voices them emphatically; but he discriminates carefully and with thought, and he knows precisely why his convictions are such and such about Strauss, about Debussy, about Massenet.

It is, however, his views on the larger æsthetic questions touching the art of music that particularly invite deliberate comment; and those I shall here venture to discuss.

There is a familiar and extensively

diffused belief that the "Neo-French" school, of whom d'Indy, Debussy, Fauré, Dukas, and De Bréville may be considered representative exemplars, achieve the singularity of their effects by a radical departure from traditional musical designs: that, aside from their indifference to the established harmonic and melodic codes, they are also experimentalists in the matter of the basic musical forms. M. d'Indy would dispel that belief. He would make it known that he and his colleagues are not the ruthless iconoclasts they are commonly supposed to be. Instead of disdaining the constructive principles of the older music, he claims to be but a perpetuator of the traditions established by the classicists. M. d'Indy holds, for example, that the basic form of his extraordinary B-flat symphony, which has proved so formidable a stumbling-block to many of its hearers, is, so

far as its fundamental design is concerned, as simple and as severely logical as if the date of its composition had been 1791, instead of 1903; and that its novelty of effect proceeds from the new harmonic, melodic, and orchestral substance which is superimposed upon old and familiar forms. And then M. d'Indy will sit at the piano and play for you, in skeletonised form, the several movements of his B-flat symphony, analysing and commenting as he proceeds. According to him, it is very plain sailing indeed; he has, one is to infer, adhered faithfully to the old and, as he calls them, "fundamental" forms, allowing himself, he admits, occasional diversions, harmonic and rhythmic, but holding constantly in view the traditional requirements of the classic moulds.

It will be recognised, I think, that this offers a somewhat different view of M. d'Indy's prepossessions and en-

deavours than the one which we have all felt free to accept. Admittedly he is a musician of profound learning and the broadest culture, a man whose intellectual curiosity is insatiable, whose sense of excellence is keen and discriminating. An aristocrat in his art, we have thought of him also as a radical, even a revolutionist, in his tendencies and methods. It was assumed that, for him, all that Wagner had achieved in the matter of harmonic novelty and flexibility of form was as a point of departure—that he went even further beyond Wagner in such matters than Wagner went beyond Gluck, Weber, and his immediate forerunners. Beyond any question at all he is a superb master of musical structure; his command of the entire technique of expression is indisputable and serene. Less poetic and subtle than Debussy, he has not De Bréville's refinement, nor

Dukas' wit and delicacy, nor Charpentier's obvious appeal, and he is less dramatic than Bruneau. He is sometimes arid and ineffectual; there are in his later music passages which it is difficult to call beautiful, and which do not seem, even after repeated study, particularly eloquent. Yet, though he often repels, he as often persuades. He can be magnificently impressive; at his best there is a grave and far-sweeping beauty, a commanding nobility, in his discourse; and, throughout, one is conscious of the workings of a vigorous and purposeful intelligence—the informing influence of one of the most distinguished and original temperaments in modern music

Deeply interesting, however, as is the substance of M. d'Indy's art, I did not set out to attempt an appraisal of its quality. Nor shall I presume to call into question the soundness of his own

analysis of it. The point of larger interest, I take it, is his position upon those matters of musical principle which touch his practice; and, more particularly, his attitude toward the question of a possible abrogation of the older forms.

He claims for his own music that its structural basis is essentially diatonic, rather than chromatic; and he repudiates the conception of a tone-art built consistently upon a scale of semitones. But do M. d'Indy and those who are in accord with him occupy an impregnable position when they assert that the diatonic scale is the only one upon which music that is strictly undramatic—music which has no organic association with words—can be built? That, as I understand him, is M. d'Indy's position. He will not for a moment admit that undramatic music may legitimately depend upon a basic use of the chromatic scale;

for he holds that the traditional diatonic relationships so long sanctified by use and custom find their justification in some subtle and inviolable correspondence with the laws of the natural world. Such a work as Wagner's "Tristan" is, he holds, structurally justifiable only on the ground of its essentially dramatic character—for here the movement and contour of the play itself supply the formal justification for the music, permitting the composer to proceed as he likes, so long as he adheres to the requirements of text and situation. But a purely symphonic work built upon a similarly shifting tonality would be, he argues, altogether anomalous. Thus his criticism of a certain very modern work was that it contained too many harmonic alterations; and he smiled, in his exquisitely amiable and gentle way, when it was pointed out to him that the

characteristic to which he objected was an intended consequence of a tonal plan deliberately adopted and built upon. To his mind it was an "impossible" conception—a violation of the immutable laws of music. "If," he observed, in effect, "we admit the validity of such a constructive method, whence shall we derive those moments of heightened and intense expression which proceed from the dissonant use of chromatic progressions? If our music is to be wholly a fabric of dissonances, erected upon a chromatic scale, whence shall we derive our points of repose as well as our moments of vivid contrast?"

He listened, it must be recorded, with admirable good temper, and with that inveterate courtesy of his, to the argument that was opposed to his, and which has been briefly crystallised in the dictum that Mr. Rupert Hughes puts

into the mouth of that vivid creature of his—"Zal," of Poland:

"There is only one key, and that is all keys in one. The dominant is no nearer to the tonic than the tonic to the key of the leading tone. There is only one scale—the chromatic."

For M. d'Indy, that were a contention of incredible wrongness. But then, as he will tell you with a kind of whimsical pathos, there are not a few young men in his Paris school whose procedures altogether confound his understanding—who go as far beyond him in theoretical and practical daring as he himself went beyond his immediate predecessors. Perhaps some day in Paris one of these pupils of his may offer to him some such explanation as this, in an attempt to justify seemingly unreasoned and reckless practices. He may say—and M. d'Indy should listen considerately and without impatience: "Is the diatonic

order the only righteous and justifiable one? *Must* tonic-dominant-subdominant relationships form the groundwork of a musical plan? Is it necessary that a composition end, at any cost, in the key in which it began? Are these things essential to an organically consistent, homogeneous, and symmetrical plan, or is another and vitally different order capable of justification? Has not the trend of musical art been uninterruptedly — from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Chopin, from Chopin to Wagner, from Wagner to Debussy—toward an increased liberty ('laxity,' you would say) in the matter of key-relationships? Is there any reason, after all, for believing that a musician who adopts, to-day or to-morrow, a structural method which involves a modulation upon every beat of the measure, is violating a principle which

permitted the music-maker of yesterday to modulate in every other bar? Do you invoke, as a majestic pattern, Nature's system of overtones? That has long ceased to hold any evident relationship to the practice of modern composers. Must one not say again, as has been said repeatedly, in the past, in defence of every musician who has had the temerity to outrage the musical code of his day, that it is merely our limited conception of the possibilities of musical expression which has been affronted, and not any august musical law? Has a scale of whole tones any inherent and implicit superiority over a scale of half-tones as material for a tonal foundation? You speak of a certain necessary symmetry and firmness which it assures to the musical structure; but are symmetry and firmness of organism possible only to music which is built upon a diatonic

basis? Is this not merely another prepossession of our too-inhospitable ears?"

It is not likely that my supposititious young iconoclast, if he be a composer, will perplex his brain over an attempt to account for his procedures by any process of æsthetic reasoning; it is more probable that he will expend all of his energy in moulding his dreams into actual and definite substance, leaving the task of their justification to his exegetical brethren of the schools. But for the sake of our present purposes, let it be imagined that he is prepared to play the rôle of expounder; might he not then, perhaps, assert himself somewhat in this wise—"Consistent and symmetrical design is as possible to an order of musical structure which derives from the chromatic scale as to one which proceeds from a diatonic basis, nor are contrast and variety of

accent precluded by the use of a tonal fabric whose fundamental stuff is dissonance chromatically derived; for, instead of starting from a diatonic and normally concordant basis, and using dissonant effects as a heightened mode of expressive utterance, I start from a basis of dissonance, chromatic in derivation, and proceed thencefrom to dissonances still more eloquent and poignant.

"I hold before my mind the thought of an art from which all crass and formal outlines, all constrictive and lifeless patterns, shall have been deleted—in which everything shall be plastic, fluent, and untrammelled: music without rigid shape or outline—wavering, meditative, cloudlike in its shifting and evanescent forms, its perfect fluidity of movement. In it I imagine no cadences, no modulations, in the obvious and familiar sense

of the terms. Succeeding tone masses dissolve, merge into one another, as water flows into water."

It is a conception which M. d'Indy would doubtless reject as bordering upon complete disorganisation; yet he would do well, in that event, to read and ponder the words of an incisive exponent of musical modernity: "Form [he means traditional, not elemental, form] is a thing of the grammarians, to be discussed behind closed doors by persons who believe in musty counterpoint and the rules of the game, . . ." and M. d'Indy is anything but a grammarian.

MODERN MUSIC AND THE "LOVE INTEREST"

. . . . For they know the things that we do not know, and have a lamp that we have lost.

—MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

"JUST as it is the easiest thing in the world to make love, so is the making of love music the easiest part of the musician's trade." The sentence is from a candid analysis of the genius of Richard Strauss by Mr. Ernest Newman, who proceeds thereafter to demonstrate his point,—which is, as he phrases it, that Strauss' interest "is in human life as a whole, not in the one wearisome episode of the eternal masculine and the eternal feminine." "Strauss," he declares, "has

thrown over almost all the old erotic tags of the musician, in order to tell the story, in the true modern spirit, of other elements in human life that also have their poetry and their pathos."

Mr. Newman's comment is just and penetrating so far as it bears upon the work of the Munich tone-poet; but it conveys the suggestion of a truth of much wider application and equal validity. It is not only in Strauss that one may note the absence of what—to borrow a convenient term from the phrase-book of the literary advertiser—one may call the "love interest," as an inspirational force; for, in this particular, Strauss is altogether representative of the contemporary music-maker, as distinguished from the composer of the years that we have left behind us. There are few things, perhaps, more curiously significant of the present estate

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of creative musical art than its comparative freedom from what Mr. Newman aptly describes as "those phantasms of sex that have been hovering over so much of our music during the past century." Music is to-day metaphysical, mystical, ethnological, pictorial in the most immediate sense of the word—a medium for the paraphrasing and annotating of the art of the painter, the fulminations of philosophy; even, in extreme instances, a vehicle for the most intimate and particular characterisation—as witness, for example, Sir Edward Elgar's orchestral commentary on the personalities of certain of his friends.

One does not have to be very far from youth to remember a time when it was quite otherwise with the divinest of the arts. Since Beethoven first disclosed to music the inexhaustible possibilities of human experience as an available subject-

matter, the emotion of sex has been, one might almost say, the paramount element in the inspirational resources of the music-maker. Can one recall the most excellent and characteristic utterances of Schubert, of Schumann, of Chopin, of Liszt, of Wagner, and not recognise at once that they are, in their most exquisite phases, just so many variations on that obsessing theme? One might allege, as the typical exemplar of his time in music, that master evocator of erotic enchantments, the creator of "Tristan und Isolde" —of which he could write to his beloved Mathilde, the inspiration and the cause of it: "I feel as if I should like to devote all the rest of my life to this music." Is not this, his supreme, his incomparable achievement, the type and index, the perfect summary of the music of the nineteenth century, in its most distinguishing aspect? Here, as Mr. Newman

has noted, the last word in sex music has been said. In this magnificent tone-poem—this music which is as "a singing and soaring flame"—is achieved an apotheosis of the erotic, a glorification of the magical ardours of sex. If one were to question whether this particular stimulus is capable—as one knows it is—of yielding in music a noble and moving loveliness, one would find one's answer in this supreme signal of the genius of Richard Wagner. And in "Tristan" Wagner exposed, beyond the possibility of misconception, the dominant emotional impulse in the music of his century.

Of his forerunners, Chopin, no doubt, came nearest to a parallel intensity in the particular region wherein I am placing Wagner's intensest inspiration. The languorous beauty, the insistent melancholy, of the febrile Pole—are they

not saturated with the colour and mood of sex? Are we not, here, in the company of one who walks among twilit groves, sultry with a half-ecstatic, an incurable passion and fervour? And Schumann, the author of that obvious autobiography of triumphant love, the D minor Symphony; Schubert—"a Pan-pipe through which the wind discoursed exquisite melodies": melodies which sing with naïve beauty the romances and tragedies of sex; Robert Franz, most gentle and continent of eroticists; Brahms, who chanted with grave ecstasy the nobler phases of romantic adventure; Liszt, Raff, Tschaikowsky (to specify at random)—were not these men, each and all, thrall, beyond every other allegiance, to the persuasions of sexual emotion? music-makers haunted and enchained by the glamour of the erotic, uttering music which makes no conceal-

ment, as it permits no doubt, of its origin ?

It is not fantastic, I think, to hold that the music which is characteristic of to-day is in a very different case. Its vivifying motives are independent, in a singular degree, of the erotic stimulus. Its impulses and influences involve a larger territory than music has ever before attempted to include within its domain ; and in this decentralisation and expansion the "love interest," as it seems to me, has come to occupy a subordinate position. This is not by any means to say that "love music"—if one may, for the sake of brevity, so designate it—has wholly vanished from the plane of appreciable things ; but merely to indicate the curious fact of its subordinate place in contemporary art. Doubtless the song form will always invite composers to the lyric utterance

of sexual sentiment; and in the songs of the modern music-maker the "love interest" is appropriately operative and evident. But—and here is the difference—the pre-eminent songs of to-day, as Strauss', MacDowell's, Loeffler's, Debussy's (Grieg is an exception), are not the most representative expression of their composers' art; while the contrary was, of course, the case with Franz and Schubert, whose songs I have alleged to enforce my argument.

The characteristic work of the indicative musicians of our time—of Strauss, Debussy, d'Indy, Loeffler, Elgar — is not largely concerned with the sex element. Strauss, it seems superfluous to note, is exploring quite other regions of human experience for the subjects of his musical imaginings. In "Tod und Verklärung" it is with spiritual conflicts and aspirations of comprehensive and

grave significance that he is concerned; "Till Eulenspiegel" is riotous and exhilarating burlesque, with an undertone of tragical irony; "Don Quixote" embodies the quintessence of philosophical comedy and the profoundest humanism; in "Also Sprach Zarathustra" he has sounded vast spaces, cosmical in their implications; "Ein Heldenleben" is broadly autobiographic — dealing only incidentally, though most eloquently, with the sexual element. His "Symphonia Domestica" is predominantly, of course, merely a brilliant and not too amusing diversion; and even in the early "Don Juan," where, surely, one might reasonably look for a deliberate exhibition of eroticism, Strauss' interest, as his prophet Mr. Newman has discerningly remarked, is in an aspect of the story "capable of much more profound and searching treatment than is usually

accorded to the legend" ; and the music, as he says, is "clearly not the work of a romanticist, but of a realist and humanist." His "Salome" is, I confess, an apparent refutation of my argument so far as it concerns Strauss himself ; but, as I have elsewhere in these studies endeavoured to demonstrate, "Salome" is in the nature of an artistic aberration, and is indicative of nothing so much as of its creator's lamentable decline from his former excellence and validity. Neither here, nor in the earlier "Feuersnot" or "Guntram," does one encounter the true Strauss. Moreover, we are here involved with the extraneous and conflicting element of drama, and I am concerning myself, in this, I hope, not over-confident inquiry, with non-dramatic music (the case of Wagner is, one need scarcely say, anomalous, since he was, in practice, infinitely less a lyric dramatist than a

tone-poet concealed behind a theatric stalking-horse).

Turning to France, we find Debussy, the most gifted representative of the neo-Gallic group, devoting his unique and exquisite art to the limning of dreams within dreams — fantasies that are coloured less with any definite emotion of sex than with a kind of vague and half-realised sensibility, the penumbra of remote illusions and disquieting enchantments. There is passion in his music, and desire; but it is the passion and the desire less of life than of the shadow of life. He reminds me of that curious visionary in one of Mr. Thomas Hardy's earlier tales, whose "Well-Beloved" presented herself to him in no settled and tangible guise, but in countless and varying incarnations—as "a spirit, a dream, an aroma . . . ." In Debussy we are, at most, upon the

borderland of the sexual world, as it was known to such ardent explorers as Chopin, Schumann, and Wagner; and we are upon the threshold of quite another world of which they were not cognisant. For Debussy's elder colleague, Vincent d'Indy, one may claim an almost equally positive exemption. D'Indy, a pupil and devoted adherent of the saintly and gentle César Franck, is as alien to the sensuously erotic in thought and musical utterance as could well be imagined. His artistic self-control is extreme; when he is musically impassioned, it is with an astringency, an austere and unyielding continence, an abhorrence of mere lusciousness, that are as striking as they are, in impulse, absolutely sincere. True, one may not forget his early "Saugefleurie," and his superb "Istar" variations—orchestral pieces of emotionally romantic intent;

but of the first it may be said that it represents a stage in d'Indy's development as a musician which he long since left behind him; and of the second, that, although it is of somewhat later origin, it is utterly and flagrantly antipodal to the expression of any merely erotic sentiment.

Charles Martin Loeffler is the most distinguished of those music-makers whom the accident of residence has imputed to America. Loeffler owns a singular power of tragic expression, an almost Attic feeling for fateful suggestion. He has been, perhaps, overmuch preoccupied with those phases of imaginative experience which present themselves to the creative sense in images of tragedy and terror. An incurable melancholy, lamentation, bitterness of soul, have been the notes that he has most persistently sounded; and that dark and *macabre* irony of which he is a master has

coloured the fabric of his musical thought. A singular and notable product has resulted: one cannot listen to such things as his song "Les Soirs d'Automne," after Gustave Kahn, all of the "Quatre Poèmes,"* and his tone-poem after Maeterlinck's "La Mort de Tintagiles," without realising Loeffler's predilection for the sombrely fantastic, and the extraordinary vividness with which he utters it in his music. He has carried his preference to an even greater length in his "Deux Rapsodies" for oboe, viola and piano, based upon poems by Maurice Rollinat. Here is reiterated the note of profound and brooding melancholy, with its undertone of lurking and indefinite horror, which had sounded so repeatedly in his earlier work; but he

* "Dansons la Gigue," "Sérénade," "Le Son du Cor s'afflige vers les Bois," after Verlaine, and Baudelaire's "La Cloche Fêlée."

has given it in these studies an even darker *timbre*, a more determined emphasis. His preference was, indeed, pledged from the start; for what could more certainly provoke in him the mood which I have insisted upon than the verse that, in this instance, serves as a point of departure for his inspiration? Here is the "programme" of the first of the Rapsodies, "L'Étang," in the veracious and happy translation of Mr. Philip Hale:

"Full of old fish, blind-stricken long ago, the pool, under a near sky rumbling dull thunder, bares between centuries old rushes the splashing horror of its gloom.

"Over yonder, goblins light up more than one marsh that is black, sinister, unbearable; but the pool is revealed in this lonely place only by the croakings of consumptive frogs.

"Now the moon, piercing at this very moment, seems to look here at herself fantastically; as though, one might say, to see her spectral face, her flat nose, the strange vacuity of teeth—a death's head lightened from within, about to peer into a dull mirror."

With the passion of love, in either its exigent or its ideal aspects, Loeffler has never seemed at all intimately concerned. One must, however, except his exquisite orchestral setting of the aubade from Verlaine's "La Bonne Chanson"—"Avant que tu ne t'en ailles"; and it is to the creative mood which inspired that rhapsodic utterance that he returns in his four songs to English words.† In the music with which he has clothed these poems one is aware of a new accent, a new impulse. There is sadness here, and the profoundest melancholy: but it is the sadness and the melancholy of ennobled passion, of the dreaming mind whose dreaming finds issue in uplifted yet intense desire; there is deep and

† Rossetti's "Sudden Light," Poe's "To Helen" and "A Dream Within a Dream," and George Cabot Lodge's fine sonnet beginning:

"Tell me again, and then lift up to me
Those frail white arms of thine . . . "

lingering pathos : but it is a pathos dyed with tenderness and beauty. He is here as a Chorus, playing upon "the silent flutes, upon the nerves wherein the soul sits enmeshed." Beautiful and distinguished, however, as these songs are, they do not, as I have already indicated, represent Loeffler's characteristic mode of expression or habit of thought, in which moods of sexual consciousness play, as has been observed, a very minor rôle indeed.

In England there is, of course, Sir Edward Elgar to think of—a musician whose complete and spontaneous immunity from any considerable erotic stimulus is so obvious as scarcely to call for deliberate statement. This detachment is evidenced in his impressive and elevated "Dream of Gerontius"; in the Gothic severity and exaltation of his "Apostles"; in the preoccupation with landscape and

atmosphere which is displayed in his "In the South"; and in the ingenious and resourceful "Variations," to which I have before referred.

I have not here concerned myself with such musicians as Saint-Saëns and Massenet, Goldmark, Grieg, and Rimsky-Korsakoff. For, admirable and distinctive as, in their widely separate ways, these men are, I think one may hold without mistake that they are, essentially, survivals of a musical past; they are not fundamentally in what is called, vulgarly enough, "the modern movement"—are not, ungenerous as it may be to insist, just and spontaneous representatives of contemporary musical thought. They do not affect, I think, the situation which has seemed to me to be characteristic, in considerable measure, of the musical art of to-day.

What, one must wonder, is signified by the attitude which, if my inferences are justified, has come to be not untypical of contemporary music? It is well that the expressional territory of the art should be widened—should be constantly widened: it is well that musicians should be increasingly sensitive, curious, and acquisitive. Yet surely it is not well that we should fail to appreciate the indispensable office of those who have looked into their enchanted hearts and have written out of the fulness of the beauty and the vision that were there. "At times," says one of the most penetrating of modern thinkers—"at times one tires of everything except illusions and dreams, seeing in these the images of august and immortal things."

STRAUSS AND "SALOME"

There is no God for Strauss . . . . there was no God for Nietzsche, no God but self. . . . You have Strauss' point of view, have you not?

—JAMES HUNEKER ("Strauss and Nietzsche").

THAT the most adored and most execrated personage in the modern tone-world should, before his fiftieth year, have become something perilously like a bore to his admirers and detractors alike is a curious outcome of one of the most fiercely waged æsthetic battles in the history of any art. Yet it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that such an occurrence is not without justification in the case of Richard Strauss; for can anyone who is at all sensitively aware of the

greatness of Strauss' past achievements doubt that his later productions, to quote the caustic indictment of Mr. Ernest Newman, are truly the work of "an enormously clever man who was once a genius"? The comment is surely as fair as it is pungent. One may concede the fact, without entertaining the slightest wish to retract anything whatsoever that one may have found to praise in the great musician who gave us so wonderful a translation of the essential "Don Quixote." Eight years ago, when Strauss presented to a somewhat indifferent world that marvellous tragi-comedy in tones, the few who gave attentive and eager heed to it recognised in its creator a genius who had achieved a quality of musical utterance quite without any precise parallel—a fulfilment of the magnificent promise disclosed by the author of "Tod

und Verklärung" and "Zarathustra." "Don Quixote" is indisputably one of the great things of music—a work charged to the brim with humanity, with eloquence, with commanding beauty: there is nothing quite like it in the entire literature of the art. It marked the summit of Strauss' achievements. But what has come over him since? "Ein Heldenleben," which followed "Don Quixote" some years later, was marred, for all its wonderful impressiveness, by evidences of a growing tendency on the part of Strauss to prostitute his great gifts—in the phrase of Mr. Newman, "to deface his picture by some piece of malicious folly; to thrust his head through the canvas and grin at the public." Of the incredible fatuity of the "Symphonia Domestica" one has not the heart to speak — a work in which triviality and ignoble burlesque do their utmost to obscure the

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glimmering of a persuasive and lovely motive.

But if the "Domestica" proved an exasperation and a disappointment, "Salome," the latest product of the Straussian intelligence, has almost the character of an affliction. His predilection for an unsuitable subject-matter, so flagrantly evidenced in the "Domestica," has here reached what it is comforting to regard as its probable climax. Not content, apparently, with satisfying the impulse which led him to devote his incomparable abilities to depicting the events of an infantile day, he has gone to the sufficiently violent extreme of writing music for Oscar Wilde's uncompromising version of the story of the dancing daughter of Herodias and her imputed passion for John the Baptist. The conception of Wilde imputes to Salome a ruthless and consuming passion for the

Prophet; and the drama reaches its climax in an exposition of this infatuation in its maddest and most ungovernable moment—Salome's voluptuous and insatiable caressing of the severed head of John.

Ineptly chosen, however, as the subject is for musico-dramatic treatment, one's quarrel with "Salome," in this instance, is primarily concerned with another matter: the essential emptiness and banality of Strauss' score. The decline in power and felicity of inspiration which had begun to make itself evident in the music of the "Domestica" is here undeniably manifest. One's objection to this latest score by the author of "Don Quixote" is not that it is cacophonous or unlovely, but that it is weak. It lacks both saliency and vividness. The musical thought never grips, never seizes the imagination as it is seized and enthralled

by page after page of "Tod und Verklärung," "Zarathustra," "Ein Heldenleben," and "Don Quixote." The lack of distinguished invention in Strauss' thematic conceptions has been, from the first, a subject of critical comment; but never before has it been possible truthfully to say of him that his ideas lacked saliency and the power of graphic denotement. Hitherto, his themes have always gripped one, whether they delighted the ear or not. Consider the seizing quality of even so unprepossessing an idea as the phrase in consecutive fifths which, in "Ein Heldenleben," limns the abhorred and abhorrent critics. It is, of course, intentionally preposterous; yet it is a master-stroke of felicitious satire — it bears the authentic stamp of the creative imagination.

There is nothing of this in "Salome." The score is rich in the familiar audacities

of Strauss' style, but they are without point, without grip. That Strauss has resorted here to effects of the most daring kind is apparent upon almost every page; and he employs them continually, not merely for the appropriate enforcement of particular moods and situations. The curious may be invited to examine, as an instance chosen at random, the passage on page 53 of the piano arrangement of the score, in which a commonplace figure in G minor is sounded above the chord F-sharp—C-sharp—D-sharp—G-natural—A-sharp. Apparently, there is no dramatic reason of pressing importance which would justify such things as this; and it is unlikely that anyone would maintain that they are either lovely, eloquent, or forceful as mere music. Let me say at this point that I, for one, have not the slightest objection to any imaginable

combination of tones, no matter how anarchistic and unprecedented, so long as it is either truly delineative or truly eloquent. Those amazing chords, for instance, which Strauss has contrived as a denotement of the final shattering of Don Quixote's reason seem to me one of the most wonderful inspirations in all music, as do some of the procedures—academically unhallowed—in the superb and pathetic passage which pictures the sorrowful home-coming of the broken-hearted Knight. These things, and many others far more audacious in the later works of such undaunted harmonic adventurers as Debussy, d'Indy, and Loeffler, are amply justified by their essential eloquence—they speak, they are vital and communicative. But it is not so with these newest cacophonies of Strauss. I shall be told, perhaps, that I do not

apprehend them—that they are music of the future, and that the pedestrian intelligence of to-day is incapable of perceiving their quality. The response is simple. Such expedients as Strauss resorts to in "Salome" are neither subtle, ingenious, nor expressive; they are perfectly easy of comprehension, and of duplication, by the most ordinary musical brain. If Strauss' incomparable ingenuity is to culminate in the simple expedient of (in Mr. Whistler's phrase) "sitting on the keyboard," his art has surely fallen upon evil days. It is the easiest thing in the world to sound a figure in A-flat minor over an F major triad, and let it go at that; but the result is neither recondite nor impressive—it is merely irritating and abortive. In "Salome," even at moments when the tension and horror of the dramatic situation justify extreme means, the musical back-

ground fails to persuade one of its fitness—as in the final scene of the drama, at Herodias' words: "Es wird schreckliches Geschehn!" where the orchestral enforcement consists of a reiterated scale passage in E-flat major against one in D minor, over a B-flat minor chord.

If it were merely the futility of Strauss' cacophonies with which one found excuse to quarrel, the case would be less serious. But the barrenness and flaccidity of his thought is evident on almost every page of "Salome." The music that he assigns to the Prophet is at times both apt and moving; but what is perhaps most surprising of all the surprising things in this disappointing score is the ineffectiveness of most of the music which is intended to voice the passionate utterances of Salome. What appears to be the theme which particularly characterises her long-

ing is inexpressive—almost commonplace. The best that Strauss can do with one of Salome's most burning declarations — "Ich will dein Mund küssen, Jochannaan!"—is to set it to a phrase which recalls the style of Gounod in his most prettily erotic moments. The only memorable pages in the score are those which comprise the final scene; yet even in the supreme moments of her amorous ecstasy Salome's utterances and their orchestral enforcement do not quite satisfy one—they lack that instant and unforgettable felicity, that incisive power of characterisation, that biting eloquence, to which Strauss has heretofore accustomed us. Salome's horrible adoration of the severed head and her wildly triumphant chantings over it are denoted with an unmistakable power and a maleficent beauty which one does not soon forget; but the

Strauss who speaks here is a minor Strauss—not he of the greater tone-poems, who swayed and enthralled us with a unique and resistless magic. There are but occasional hints of that earlier and towering genius in this dull and pretentious music—music that is remarkable for the definiteness with which it seems to mark an artistic decline of tragic proportions.

What is the cause of this singular and melancholy deterioration? Where, one cannot help speculating, lies the flaw in the man's artistic constitution that has made it possible? It may not seem fantastical to seek for it causes both physical and spiritual. Touching what suggests itself as the more obvious cause —the physical—one will not go far astray, I imagine, if one accepts Mr. Newman's explanation: "No artist," he observes, "can put so great a physical and mental

strain upon himself as Strauss does and still keep his brain at its best. With all his many duties and occupations, his conducting and his constant travelling, it is a wonder he has any strength left to compose. For years he has been wearing his sensitive nervous system down to the very edge; and I should not be surprised to find that in doing so he has injured a good deal the delicacy of its tissue. It is said that he lives the busy life he does in order to make enough money to give up all public work and devote himself entirely to composition; but before that time comes he will probably, if he is not careful, have lost more of the divine fire than he can ever replace."

That accounts, unquestionably, for a good part of the phenomenon; but it still leaves, I think, something to be explained — something that must be

referred to a cause more deeply seated —to a flaw more spiritual than physical or psychic. Is there not operative in Strauss some active principle which corresponds to the philosophic attitude of Friedrich Nietzsche, for whom Strauss has confessed, in more ways than one, a fervent admiration? Is he not smitten with that passion for personal aggrandisement, that vicious "Titanism" of which Mr. Huneker speaks in his acute analysis of Nietzsche's temperament and teachings: that ruthless and strabismic individualism which, for all its valuable potentialities, is, at bottom, irremediably false and maleficent? It is, is it not, the fitting creed of such an intelligence as could father that precious witticism in the "Roving Expeditions of an Inopportune Philosopher": "Kant, or *cant*, as an intelligent character"! The Nietzschean proclivities which I have assumed in

Strauss find issue in a growing lust for mere enormity. He seems to have been seduced by some perverted conception of Nietzsche's spiritual megalomania. He would employ an orchestra of a size and complexity hitherto unimagined — an orchestra swollen out of all proportion to the character of the musical thought it is intended to convey (I am speaking, let it be remembered, of the later Strauss—not the admirable Strauss of "Don Quixote"); he would seek out the most brutal and abortive cacophonies; he would burden his music-paper with a welter of polyphonic extravagances: he would, in short, impose himself upon you by sheer magnitude of dimension and immensity of mass. He has acquired all the Nietzschean arrogance and contempt, forgetting that no artist may progressively achieve save through humility and sacri-

fice, through ceaseless self-scrutiny and rigorous self-discipline. Thus, for him, mere perfection of expression has come to seem almost negligible: the art of salient and vital utterance which of old he knew so well how to exert has come to withhold its secrets from him; he is no longer the master, but the slave, of his temperament.

He was never, one must admit, of that supreme artistic type, the εὐφυής of the Greeks: the ideally gifted and perceptive artist, sensitive and vigilant and exquisitely scrupulous, of whom Mozart and Wagner, Raphael and Shelley, were divergent yet representative exemplars. May one not conclude that it was the want of this infallible instinct of æsthetic rectitude, and the growing dominance of an indurating egoism, which made possible the extravagances of "Ein Heldenleben," the elaborate fatuity of the

"Symphonia Domestica," the barbarousness and banality of "Salome"?

I cannot but recall, when I think of the infirmities of this brilliant and commanding intelligence, the comment with which Mr. Henry James concludes his studious estimate of the genius of Gustave Flaubert: Let him, says Mr. James, "be preserved and presented as one of the most conspicuous of the faithless. It was not that he went too far, but that he stopped too short. He hovered for ever at the public door, in the outer court, the splendour of which very properly beguiled him, and in which he seems still to stand as upright as a sentinel and as shapely as a statue. . . . The shining arms were meant to carry further, the other doors were meant to open. He should at least have listened at the chamber of the soul. This would have floated him on a deeper tide;

above all, it would have calmed his nerves." That is not so precisely true of Strauss as it is of Flaubert; but it is extremely suggestive, and it is rich in wisdom.

A NEGLECTED PAGE OF WAGNER'S

Grant, sir, that the thoughts which so much passion and beauty awake . . . may teach you and tell you how deep is the admiration which this master-work will excite at all times and everywhere.

—PRINCESS WITTGENSTEIN to WAGNER.

THERE are few more pathetic passages in the records of musical art than that in the anonymous "Memoiren einer Idealistin" which depicts the visit of the writer and some of her friends to Wagner's house on the night of the disastrous third performance of "Tannhäuser" at the Paris Opéra, in March, 1861, after the blackguards of the Jockey Club had brought utter ruin upon Wagner's ardently cherished hopes — that bitterly consummated occasion which he

had prophesied to Liszt six months before as "the first triumph of my art which I personally witness." When the "Idealistin" and her friends arrived, long after midnight, Wagner and Minna were quietly at supper. "He received the news of the third and most violent battle of all," relates the narrator, "with a smile, and joked with Olga, saying he had heard that she had hissed his music. But by the trembling of the hand he held out to me I felt that he was deeply agitated. Although all the disgrace of this proceeding fell back on its perpetrators, still, one more hope of the composer was gone, and the rough path of life, which never seemed to grow smoother, again lay before him in its dismal and tortuous windings." *

* I have used here the translation contained in Mr. Henry T. Finck's excellent "Wagner and his Works."

Wagner might well have retorted upon his opponents, at almost any point in his unparalleled career, in the words of that appeal addressed by an imperturbable and gifted teacher to a class of restless pupils: "Bear with me awhile longer, gentlemen: I have still a few more pearls to cast." Wagner had inexhaustible pearls to cast, and he cast them with splendid prodigality, with an incredibly resurgent confidence. He arose from the heart-breaking task of completing "Tristan und Isolde" only to apply himself, scarcely a twelvemonth later, to the formidable labour of reconstructing the entire first scene of "Tannhäuser."

"I am removing such weak points as I have discovered in the score," he observes casually in the course of a letter to Liszt.* "I am rewriting the great Venus scene, and hope to improve the

* Sept. 13, 1860.

effect thereby. The ballet scene also will be entirely new, after a more elaborate plan which I have made for it." Yet this particular achievement, so negligently referred to, constitutes one of his most superb artistic successes—a success that he surpassed only in his supreme moments.

This remodelled first scene, familiarly known as the "Paris version," had a singular genesis, and it has encountered a not less singular fate. Consider, for a moment, the circumstances. Here was a musician returning, after almost a score of years, to the source of an earlier inspiration, steeping himself anew in the moods of a subject which, as it had then addressed itself to him, he had long since set behind him. "You have perhaps never undergone so hard a trial of patience," wrote Liszt during the summer of 1860, when Wagner was

"once more in the old 'Tannhäuser' birth throes," "as the re-writing and studying of this work, which to you is partly 'ein überwundener Standpunkt.'" Wagner had, so far as his creative activities were concerned, put "Tannhäuser" out of his mind in 1845; yet now, fifteen years later, he took up again this *jejeune* score, which he had transcended by a decade and a half of vigorous intellectual growth, and, moved by a veritable passion for perfection, remodelled an essential part of it in a spirit of unalloyed artistic enthusiasm, pouring into the crude and tentative framework of his youthful creation the rich and splendid substance of his ripened dreams. It was an act of magnificent supererogation. So far as the popular reception of the opera was concerned, it would have gone quite as well—even better, indeed—had the old version of the Venus scene been used;

for the re-written *bacchanale* resulted merely in placing increased difficulties in the way of an effective performance, requiring, as Wagner notes in his treatise "On Conducting," the dancers to enact "something bold and wildly sublime, resembling the groups and processions of bacchanals on antique reliefs." It is salutary to recall, too, that these gratuitous changes were undertaken by Wagner at a time when the much-tried composer was harassed to the limit of endurance by the innumerable practical cares incidental to a crucial first performance—cares which a less exigent artistic conscience might have shirked or transferred. There was the formidable task of a French translation to reckon with, and there were those appalling 164 rehearsals, at 102 of which Wagner was present in person. There were nerve-wearing contentions with the Director of

the Opéra, with the singers, with the conductor and orchestra, with the ballet-master. Yet in the midst of these "extraordinary exertions and excitements," of which he speaks resignedly in a letter to Liszt, he could hope to find occasion and inspiration for the composing of page upon page of new and significant music! No wonder that, as he wrote at the height of his tribulations to the unwearying and devoted Franz, he wondered how the thing was to be accomplished "without a miracle."

It has been observed that the fortunes of this new "Tannhäuser" music have been as singular as its genesis. Perhaps it would not be extravagant to say that they have been even more singular. To close and indefatigable students of Wagner, the quality and significance of the new music to which he set the actual text of the French translation of

the scene between Venus and Tannhäuser in the first act, and the revised *bacchanale* which precedes it, are doubtless recognised and familiar; but to whom else? This particular phase of Wagner's creative development has suffered a curious and unfortunate eclipse, so far as any general and adequate appreciation of it is concerned. To allege a partial but immediate indication, it has wholly escaped the exegetical commentators. You will search the thematic Baedekers in vain for any evidence of the fact that the compilers have been aware that in the revised first act of "Tannhäuser" are some of Wagner's most distinguished, characteristic, and absorbing inventions. Whereas, for the average music-lover, this especial page of Wagner's is doubtless read with unseeing eyes. Yet the paradox of the matter is that this scene, in its revised

version, has, of course, been repeatedly performed, both in America and in Europe. The explanation is, very likely, that the average Wagner listener or expounder, unaware or forgetful of the history of "Tannhäuser," quite fails to realise that, while the opera is written for the most part in the immature and experimental manner of Wagner's so-called "second style" — the style that is represented, roughly speaking, by "Der Fliegende Holländer" and "Lohengrin"—almost two-thirds of the first act, as it now stands, is written in his incomparably richer, subtler, and more individual "third style"—the style of "Siegfried" and "Tristan." An imperfect realisation of this fact not unnaturally results, in the case of those musical intelligences that are neither over-curious nor uncomfortably alert, in a failure to perceive the true significance

of that which is set before them.* Thus it happens that this authentic treasure-trove of Wagnerian gold remains, save for a few, unnoticed and unenjoyed.

More than ten years ago, Mr. Finck, in his devoted and exhaustive "Wagner and his Works," remarked that, for the student of Wagner, there could be "no task more fascinating and instructive than a minute comparison of the old "Tannhäuser" with the Paris version; noting how an altered rhythm here, a new modulation there, changes the character of the melody, and gives the words . . . . a deeper dramatic import; how the musical motives are repeated and combined with the subtle psychologic art of the 'Tristan' style." I have no intention of venturing upon any such minute

* It is also to be considered that the published score containing the "Paris version" is neither widely circulated nor easy to obtain.

comparison as Mr. Finck suggests—that is an adventure rather for the seclusion of the library than for the explicitness of the printed page. Yet one may not improperly pay a general tribute of appreciation to the beauty and potency, and, for the student, the inexhaustible interest, of these unjustly neglected additions.

It is well to remind oneself that when Wagner, in 1860, set about revising "Tannhäuser" for the approaching production of the work at the Paris Opéra, he had already put forth all but his last three music dramas, except for that portion of "Siegfried" which he completed in 1869. That is to say, he had written not only "Rienzi," "Der Fliegende Holländer," and "Lohengrin," but "Rheingold," "Die Walküre," two-thirds of "Siegfried," and "Tristan und Isolde." "Die Meistersinger," "Die Götterdäm-

merung," and "Parsifal" were to come; but his essential message had already, in great part, been declared. With these facts in mind, one cannot but agree with Mr. Finck in lamenting, not that the Paris version of "Tannhäuser" is "a mixture of Wagner's second and third styles," but "that the composer, instead of wasting a year on the Parisians, did not employ his time in writing the whole of 'Tannhäuser' in the 'Tristan' style; retaining the motives, but elaborating them in the much more finished polyphonic and orchestral art of his third style, as he did in the new duo and the *bacchanale*." That must be the conclusion, one would imagine, of anyone who compares the two versions—the "Tannhäuser" of 1845 and the "Tannhäuser," so far as its first act is concerned, of 1860. During that period his style underwent, of course, a complete meta-

morphosis. Set the two scores side by side, and note the extremely significant difference: the difference between the comparatively elemental psychology of the one and the subtle and eloquent emotional delineation of the other; the abandonment of the rococo and strutting manner of the earlier writing, with its lingering Italianism, for the finely poised and delicately elaborated manner of "Siegfried" and "Tristan." Notice, for instance, the absence in the new version of those meaningless and conventionalised violin runs, those fatuous string tremolos, that cropped out upon every occasion that seemed to demand an intense dramatic handling; observe, also, the sparing use of mere accompaniment figures, and the enrichment of the orchestral part by innumerable polyphonic and harmonic felicities. And how greatly the treatment of the voice

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parts has gained in sharpness and effectiveness of characterisation!

Both the *bacchanale* and the scene between Venus and Tannhäuser have been considerably amplified; the former has been increased in length from seven pages to twenty, the latter from twenty-five to forty-eight—an addition to the original score of thirty-six pages.* Throughout the seventy-odd pages which now comprise the *bacchanale* and the first scene proper, there is scarcely a measure that has not undergone some transformation, harmonic, rhythmic, or orchestral; and there is a liberal proportion of absolutely new matter. As a casual example of the kind of revamping that has effected so vital an alteration in the character of the music, and that is a perpetual source

* For convenience of indication, these references are made to apply to the piano arrangement of the score published by Durand, of Paris.

of delight to the attentive student, I cannot forbear to adduce—from among many similar felicities—the utterly simple yet most sensitive alteration that has been made in the two "seventh" chords which immediately follow Tannhäuser's words: ". . . que mon sommeil s'âchève!" on page 49 of the Durand edition of the piano score (I quote the French translation of the text, which Wagner used when re-writing this scene). The alteration occurs in the second of the two chords, and consists merely in the substitution of F-sharp for E in the tenor voice of the harmony; yet it enriches and vitalizes the chord to an extraordinary degree. The score is full of such things—substitutions and elisions, modifications and expansions, that, in the total result, help to transform this portion of the opera from a fragmentary and negligible production into

a masterpiece of dramatic and emotional exposition.

Of much greater consequence, however, is the new matter that has been introduced into the score. This consists, in the main, of three new themes, with their reiteration and development. All of these appear in the *bacchanale*. The first is the superbly impassioned and "Tristan"-like phrase which occurs, *fortissimo*, just before the amorous orgy reaches its tumultuous climax, and which is anticipated some twenty bars earlier (on page 34, line 5, 6, of the vocal score). The second is the *motif* in E-flat major which occurs in the orchestra fourteen measures before the chorus of sirens is first heard. It is derived from Venus' song of seduction in the third act—"Viens goûter l'éternelle ivresse ; Endors ta douleur sur mon cœur!"—and is used with extraordinary effectiveness through-

out the early portions of the scene. The third new theme is one of Wagner's most haunting inventions. It is the exquisite phrase in E major that is heard as the apparition of Europa and her escort fade from view, while the Graces resume their languorous dance. This is developed in a lovely passage of chromatic thirds that singularly suggests the Gutrune music in "Die Götterdämmerung"; it is used again with piercing effect near the conclusion of the *bacchanale;* and just before the beginning of the first scene, where Tannhäuser first endeavours to dislodge the burden of his too cloying dreams, it is ingeniously and movingly combined with a fragmentary reminiscence of the song of the pilgrims —one of those simple but happy procedures which Wagner's matured art had taught him how to accomplish.

The musical climax of the scene—and,

as the score now stands, of the opera—is Venus' final appeal to her disaffected lover, the text of which does not occur in the old version. It begins at the words "Aurais-je mérité qu'à moi, par qui tout aime"—sung "avec tendresse"—on page 87 of the piano arrangement. The music is remarkable not only for its loveliness and intensity, which are extreme, but for its curious foreshadowing of the mood and colour of the "Kundry" music in the seduction scene of the second act of "Parsifal." The suggestion is not fanciful; the anticipated resemblance is perfectly plain, particularly in the first dozen measures. Later in the scene occur some marked adumbrations of "Die Meistersinger"; otherwise the writing is pretty thoroughly saturated in the "Tristan" quality. It is very affecting and striking music; Wagner has seldom written with more concentrated ex-

pressiveness or more insistent tenderness. It is full of a mood of yearning that is singularly lacking in the accent of sheer sensuality—that has, indeed, an obvious nobility.

Would that Wagner had heightened the beauty and the intensity of the whole of "Tannhäuser" as he has of this first scene! must surely be the regretful thought of many who study, side by side, the old score and the new. That, too, must be one's response to those who complain that the score, in its present and, alas, final condition, straddles violently the upper and nether regions of Wagner's æsthetic world. One might as reasonably object — to adapt an irreverent comment of Walter Pater's— to reading Poe "in Baudelaire's translation" because it is only half Baudelaire.

THE PLACE OF LISZT

Your orchestral works . . . are so new, so incomparable to anything else, that criticism will take a long time to find what to make of them.

—RICHARD WAGNER.

(Letter to Liszt, July 12, 1856.)

SIGNS are not wanting that contemporary criticism is in process of rendering to Franz Liszt—Liszt the composer of the "Faust" and "Dante" symphonies and the twelve symphonic poems — some portion of the things that are his: that he is at last to compel the recognition that has been so long and so perversely withheld from him. Is he, one wonders, no longer to stand among composers as, with the single and notorious exception of Berlioz, the most diversely appraised

and grossly misapprehended figure in musical history? "The cloud of glory playing round a classic is a mist as dangerous to the future of a literature as it is intolerable for the purposes of history," wrote M. Charles d'Héricault; "it substitutes a halo for a physiognomy, it puts a statue where there was once a man . . . it claims not study but veneration . . . it gives us a human personage no longer, but a God seated immovable amidst His perfect work, like Jupiter on Olympus." If one reads it in connection with the history of criticism as it touches the creative work of Liszt, this dictum of M. d'Héricault is not unilluminating. Had Liszt established for his fame even such a baleful tradition of worship as is deprecated by the French critic, his case to-day would have been far different. As a composer he evoked no such critical legend of adulation, no

such "cloud of glory" as, for so long, played about the head of Mendelssohn, let us say, crystallising for him a tradition of excellence whose persistence is as astonishing as it is distorting. Because of reasons which it is perfectly easy to apprehend, Liszt, as a composer, created no luminous and compelling image of himself in the mind of his own and of succeeding generations. He stands, before the popular understanding, for other things, for other achievements: for anything rather than as a musical creator of brilliantly original gifts and an innovator of epoch-making importance—as, indeed, the father of the characteristic musical form of our day. It is surely one of the paradoxes, as it is not the least of the tragedies, of modern music that the man who not only stamped upon his art a style vivid and individual in an extreme degree, but who achieved

nothing less than a new and revolutionary form of instrumental utterance, should be denied the recognition freely accorded to musicians of utterly inferior calibre and of negligible and receding importance.

To establish such claims for Liszt, in any considerable number of minds, were a hopeless and unprofitable task. There are those—and they are not few—who cannot see the real for the factitious and superficial Liszt; for whom the man of rare creative genius, the impulsive musical poet, is immovably obscured by the mere virtuoso, the incomparable showman, the engaging protagonist of various *aventures d'amour*, the large-souled benefactor: all that the *grand seigneur* of modern music represents for the average observer and the more casual order of historian. There are those, too, among the more acute, who

are sincerely unable to discern, behind the often meretricious and bombastic manner of the composer, the authentically original beauty of that part of his discourse which most truly represents him. It is clear that criticism must learn to distinguish between, and strive to enforce, the vital and positive difference between the actual two Liszts—Liszt the music-maker of indubitable genius, and Liszt the virtuoso, the fertile contriver of amazing paraphrases and *jeux d'esprit*, the *poseur*, man of the world, and patron *en prince*. That the nobler figure will eventually emerge and predominate there is little doubt; it is encountering an opposition that loses something of ignorance and prejudice with the passage of every year.

If our admirable but too confident contemporary criticism would aid the accomplishment of so desirable an event,

it would do well, from time to time, to reflect upon certain obvious facts in the career of Liszt that are far too imperfectly realised. It is salutary, for example, to recall that at a time when Richard Wagner's creative activity was achieving its first emphatic expression —with the completion, in 1854, of "Rheingold"—Liszt had put upon paper six of his twelve symphonic poems. That is merely another way of saying that when Wagner had to his credit the finished scores of only his "Rienzi," "Fliegende Holländer," "Tannhäuser," and "Lohengrin," his unwearying benefactor and father confessor had composed his "Berg-symphonie" (1847–8), "Tasso" (1849),* "Héroïde funèbre" (1849-50), "Mazeppa" (1850), "Prome-

* "Tasso" was elaborately revised and revamped in 1854, the year in which Wagner completed "Rheingold."

theus" (1850), "Festklänge" (1851), and the greater part of his "Faust" symphony. By 1859, when Wagner's most complete representative work, "Tristan und Isolde," was just out of his hands, Liszt had accomplished the last of that monumental series of tone-poems (not to speak of the "Faust" and "Dante" symphonies) that was to revolutionise the traditions of instrumental structure and widen immeasurably the bounds of orchestral speech.

Consider that in, for example, one of the earlier of these works, "Tasso," Liszt anticipated modes of expression which, as they live with a more communicative vitality in Wagner's later music, possess to-day a scarcely impaired eloquence. Consider—to put it baldly—the degree in which Liszt, on page after page of his symphonic poems, anticipates almost the precise order of

eloquence and beauty for which we give Wagner the undivided credit. Study the manner in which "Tristan" is foreshadowed in certain of the chromatic passages in the earlier portion of "Tasso;" observe the "Walküre" adumbration at the beginning of the "Faust" symphony (a fact of musical parentage which Wagner himself acknowledged); note the original of the "love glance" theme from "Tristan" in the phrase for violins, flutes, and clarinets on page 115 of the "Faust" score. It would be easy to multiply such instances, and to end by proving too much by them; for it is somewhat late in the day to accuse Wagner of extensive and deliberate pilferings from the musical coffers of his infinitely patient friend. But it is surely just as well that such things should from time to time be recalled, and that an occasional tribute

of appreciation should be offered up to the memory of a musician who, as James Brown said of his friend, the poet Gray, "never spoke out"—who would have been the last in the world to claim for himself his rightful due.

For any one who will return, with a deliberately unbiased vision, to a study of the greater orchestral scores of Liszt, they cannot but present a continually surprising revelation. One does not mean alone, of course, that, like "Hamlet," they are "full of quotations":—that in them may be traced the features of Liszt's æsthetic progeny—the Raffs and Saint-Saëns, the Goldmarks and Tschaikowskys, the Strausses and Rimsky-Korsakoffs and Glazounoffs of a later time. There is much more in these works than the dim and ghostly prophecy of our musical day; there is in them a sincerity and vitality of emotion, a vivid-

ness of style, a genuine eloquence, and a richness of musical substance, that tell their own tale — for they evince an authentic inspiration.

In any final analysis, however, one is constrained to admit that, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, Liszt chiefly counts to us historically. It is doubtful if, for all his excellences, he will ever be placed in the class of those composers who have achieved uniquely well a particular order of musical expression. He has uttered no word, for example, that Wagner did not afterwards declaim with far greater potency and a more eminent felicity. Liszt has done nothing which, to-day, strikes one as insurpassable—as one finds an insurpassable quality in, for instance, the characteristic accent of Bach, of Beethoven, of Wagner, of Brahms. To confine oneself to a modern instance, one cannot imagine Wagner

being outdone on his own ground—one cannot imagine the fundamental idea that lies at the root of, say, the "Ach, Isolde!" passage in the third act of "Tristan," being uttered with a more penetrating eloquence or a completer beauty: the thing has been said there once and for all—with an absolute finality. If one applies such a test as this to Liszt, even at his supreme best it will be found that he has said nothing which has not elsewhere, in its own kind, been surpassed; and the ironic tragedy of the case is that others have merely reaped, however fairly, the fruit of his planting. His idiom is, of course, unmistakable, and, at its best, full of character. Why, then, does it not count for more in his work? Why was he destined, in the phrase of Mr. James Huneker, "to see, not to enter, the promised land"?

For one thing, like Gray, "he never spoke out"—he never gave full and deliberate utterance to the inspiration and the conviction that were in him. He was the victim of his diverse and amazing talents. His activities, his enthusiasms, were too manifold, too variously engrossing. As a composer, he gives one the impression of a brilliantly gifted nature of superabundant energies, creating through sheer excess of constructive impulse. One cannot think of him as the scrupulous and exigent artist rapt by an obsessing vision, and painfully, yet with an unceasing ecstasy, moulding it into a perfected entity of form and colour. Had he possessed a greater capacity for concentration, had he been able, through some process of intellectual distillation, to bring his thought to the uttermost pitch of felicity of which it was capable—had

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he, in short, been a supreme artist as well as a valid though wayward genius, what might he not have achieved? There is always present in his writing a certain alloy—ideas of unquestionable power and beauty are jostled by conceptions that have their root in an incurable disposition toward bombast and theatricalism of effect. He never lacked for ideas, *per se;* but he was too ready to take without close scrutiny whatever offered itself to his creative purposes. His work is full of magnificent gleams; but how often the glamour and poetry of the idea is marred by a fervour that is cheap and easy, by rhetoric that is ornamental rather than essential and spontaneous! Did he ever, one wonders, quite see to the end of his inspirations? Did he ever fully expose all that they possessed of loveliness or intensity or dramatic force?

It seems not improbable that, when the measure of genius that was his shall have compelled its inevitable acknowledgment, he will come to share the fate of those innovators and pioneers of art who have had to see the result of their labours and intuitions come to a complete fulfilment in the work of their successors: that he will stand with Monteverde and with Gluck, whose apparent destiny it was to sow the seed from which others should garner the harvest. Yet, when one has said all that may be said of him in praise and in detraction, how vivid and unforgettable a figure remains! how rare and lovable a man, how gifted and indispensable a music-maker!

SOME MAETERLINCK MUSIC

. . . Extracting, by a kind of subtle alchemy, a beauty not without the elements of tranquillity, of dignity and order, out of a matter at first sight painful and strange.

—WALTER PATER ("Greek Studies").

IT is a circumstance perhaps less singular than fortunate that the two composers who have most seriously concerned themselves with setting to music the inventions of that admirable mystic and poet, Maurice Maeterlinck, should have been the very ones who, of all living music-makers, were best fitted for that particular task: Claude Debussy and Charles Martin Loeffler. In Debussy's setting for the lyric stage of "Pelléas et Mélisande" — in which Maeterlinck's work becomes a "drame lyrique" in five

acts and twelve tableaux—one cannot but recognise a paraphrase which is virtually ideal. Here is the very accent of Maeterlinck, in one of his authentic inspirations—his very *timbre* and atmosphere; and throughout one realises how peremptory is the need for music in any such poetic endeavour as Maeterlinck's original—despite his well-remembered and singular disapproval of the process to which Debussy has subjected his play. In this drama nothing that comes to pass is without significance, and even that which is merely contributive possesses an influential beauty and meaning within itself. With what fulness of effect, no less than justness of perception, these implicit qualities have been seized upon and exposed by Debussy, I have attempted elsewhere in these studies to show. It is sufficient for the immediate purpose of this

inquiry to repeat the opinion there advanced—that Debussy has made exquisitely manifest in his music that in Maeterlinck's tragedy which is most deeply and informingly characteristic. It is difficult to conceive of a task more completely, more perfectly achieved. To realise, by contrast, Debussy's absolute qualification for the enterprise, one has only to set beside his "Pelléas" score the incidental music written for Maeterlinck's play by Debussy's countryman, Gabriel Fauré. To enlarge upon the contrast which such an exhibit would discover would be both futile and invidious. It is sufficient to say that the difference is simply and baldly the difference between entire fitness and evident incompetence.

Those who are most sympathetically aware of the nature of Charles Martin Loeffler's artistic personality have dis-

cerned in it two quite distinct and contrasting tendencies. It should be postulated, in even the most summary attempt at an indication of Loeffler's qualities, that he is one of the most singular temperaments that is getting itself expressed, with any degree of publicity, in the music of to-day. It is easy to ascribe him to what is somewhat loosely termed the "neo-French" school, for his kinship with such men as Debussy, De Bréville, and their fellows is close and indubitable. But there is much in Loeffler's musical constitution and point of view that sets him quite positively apart from any of his Gallic contemporaries. There are moments when his fastidiousness of accent, his inexorable pursuit of the esoteric, seem more French than the French. Again, one finds him speaking a language that would not only be strange to Paris, but whose geographical

origin it is difficult to trace. He discloses at times—frequently, indeed—a power of tragic utterance which one would seek vainly in any music that, to-day, is coming out of France. One finds it operative, for example, in his sombrely beautiful setting of Verlaine's "Le Son du Cor s'afflige vers les Bois," with its atmosphere of brooding melancholy and vague, unnameable dread; and in portions of his song, "La Cloche Fêlée," after Baudelaire. Here he is as one who evokes for us "shadowy figures, crowned with terror and beauty, on the verge of a dark sea where the menace of an obscure wind is continually heard beyond the enchanted shore"; we are in a remote and grief-haunted world, where sinister omens and the echoes of forgotten sorrows are borne upon every air. But nowhere in Loeffler's work is this capacity for tragic eloquence more unmistakably

evidenced than in his symphonic poem inspired by that terrible and perturbing drama of Maeterlinck's, "La Mort de Tintagiles." For Loeffler, the voice of Maeterlinck has here been as the voice of one habituated to the accents of tragic beauty and tragic fate—one whose imagination is thrall to those "silent arrivals of destiny" which yield, for any kindred instinct, so unique and poignant an emotion. Loeffler has sensed with a peculiar intensity this phase of Maeterlinck's thought. He himself, as I have already observed of him, has a singular power of realising moods charged with fateful suggestion; a persistent affiliation for those phases of imaginative experience which find issue in symbols of tragedy and terror. What could have been more natural than that the drama of Maeterlinck's which most completely embodies his impulse toward

the creation of images of tragic destiny should have evoked in Loeffler a desire to seek some tonal correspondence for it? He has succeeded in transmuting the fundamental substance of the play into a tonal fabric of rich and profound suggestiveness. Its power of communication is great and memorable; its justness of representation is as continually surprising as it is compelling. It is music of impassioned and piercing beauty, one of those subtler masterpieces of modern art which exert an increasing spell.

But, for the meditative observer, this paraphrase of Maeterlinck's lacerating and grievous play, and Debussy's equally significant transcription of "Pelléas et Mélisande," present another and larger aspect than is offered for consideration by their specifically musical quality.

Surely one does not impute to this music an unwarrantable burden in assum-

ing to see in it an exceptionally persuasive demonstration of that power which, among all the arts, the art of music pre-eminently possesses—the power of transcending and transfiguring its subject-matter, of illuminating what one may call, perhaps not too liberally, its spiritual overtones: of transmuting that in it which is acrid, or obsessing, or tragical, into something richly and deeply solacing. Examine, in this light, the conclusion of Loeffler's music to "La Mort de Tintagiles." The poignant and affecting tenderness, the grave beauty, of the peroration (those lingering final measures that proceed to so reticent and exquisite a close) have, apparently, no analogue, no complement, in Maeterlinck's play. The music, in this place, seems to have been arbitrarily superposed upon the dramatic and psychological process of the poet, which is prevailingly sombre, and which ends

upon a note of utter and calamitous despair. Of course Loeffler has not attempted a note-for-note paraphrase of Maeterlinck's play, but has concerned himself rather with an embodiment of the essential moods of the dramatist; yet he would seem to have ended his tone-poem upon a note that is foreign to the motive of the play. One finds a similar anomaly in the case of the *finale* of Debussy's "Pelléas." The music seems, at first, over-lovely, over-ingenuous, for the bitter sadness of the play's concluding scene. Yet when one comes deeply to know and savour this music, and that of Loeffler's which I have adduced, one knows that it is subtly warranted, that it belongs, that it is truly expressive of a reality that is implicit in the subject of the poet. Is not one justified, in attempting an elucidation of such seeming anomalies—

which are not, of course, peculiar to the very modern works I have alleged, but are merely, in them, uncommonly marked —is not one justified in saying that the musician may and does disclose in his subject-matter elements of rarefied beauty and meaning that are not conveyed through the verbal medium of the poet or dramatist, or through any art save his own? Is not this, indeed, the chief and essential glory of music? So far as M. Maeterlinck is concerned, one may convict him out of his own mouth, without, perhaps, incurring the reproach of reading his words too literally.

"It is idle to think," he observes in that inexhaustibly beautiful essay of his on "Silence," "it is idle to think that, by means of words, any real communication can ever pass from one man to another. . . . Were I to speak to you at this moment of the gravest things of all—

of love, death, or destiny—it is not love, death, or destiny that I should touch; and, my efforts notwithstanding, there should always remain between us a truth which had not been spoken." One would like to reply to M. Maeterlinck that the art of music may achieve what the art of verbal utterance may not: to argue, indeed, that music alone is capable of complete communication—that while the poet and the painter may exquisitely express—may, indeed, at times, communicate—music's natural concern is with the *ding an sich* rather than its symbol: with substantives rather than with attributes: with ecstasy, let us say, in its absolute essence, rather than with ecstasy as it is represented by the dramatist through a "Juliet"; and that the communication of essential things is thus an inevitable function of its being. One might call to M. Maeterlinck's attention

an earlier yet similar (though more extensive) philosophy than his own—the philosophy of a musician who was, if but occasionally and uncertainly, a sound and searching thinker. "The profoundest essence of our thoughts," wrote Wagner in 1857, "is unconveyable in direct ratio as they gain in depth and compass and thus withdraw beyond the bounds of Speech—of Speech, which does not belong to our own real selves, but is given us second-hand to help our converse with an outer world that, at bottom, can only understand us clearly when we place ourselves entirely on the level of life's vulgar needs. The more our thoughts depart from that level, the more laborious becomes the effort to express them — until at last the philosopher, at risk of being not understood at all, uses language merely in its inverse sense . . . . Now Music is in-

disputably the fittest medium for the thought that cannot be conveyed by Speech, and one well might call the inmost essence of all vision, Music."

For M. Maeterlinck, silence is the supreme revealer—it is only through silence, he asserts, that any real communication is effected . . . . "for the reservoirs of silence lie far above the reservoirs of thought." But the reservoirs of music, one might add, lie higher still. It is true that, as he observes, the time has not yet come to speak lucidly of these things. But would not M. Maeterlinck, if he chose to understand it, perhaps to love it, find in music only a richer and more potent form of that telepathic silence that he knows so well—a silence capable of infinite revelation — capable, even, of making audible "the murmur of the gods"?

THE END.

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